DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 082 260 CS 500 425

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TITLE Improving the Elementary and Secondary Curriculum through the SCA (Speech Communication Association) National Office.
PUB DATE Nov 73
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Assn. (59th, New York City, Nov. 8-11, 1973)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Communication (Thought Transfer); Curriculum Development; *Elementary School Curriculum; *High School Curriculum; *Information Dissemination; Inservice Teacher Education; Speech; *Speech Curriculum; *Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *Speech Communication Association

ABSTRACT

Teachers of speech communication, on the elementary and secondary school level as well as college, need these areas of services from their national Speech Communication Association (SCA): dissemination of materials and information in their topic fields, coordination of education-related information and stimilation of appropriate research and instructional projects, and establishment of liaisons between themselves and various government agencies, institutions, and other academic disciplines. In response, the SCA should try to answer these needs by encouraging specific programs. One such program which would aid all levels of speech communication teachers is the stimulation of broader curricular development. Curricula improvement should be accompanied by more inservice training programs and greater attention to the quality of classroom teaching methods. A higher level of research in speech communication education, as well as more intensive teacher education in colleges, is necessary if these goals are to be achieved. Other programs which should be fostered by SCA to strengthen speech communication teaching are more faculty exchange programs, stronger regional speech communication associations, and more feedback of member opinions to the national SCA office. (CH)

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IMPROVING THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY CURRICULUM THROUGH THE SCA NATIONAL OFFICE

by Barbara Lieb-Brilhart

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Presented at the Annual Convention of the
Speech Communication Association

Friday, November 9, 9-10:20 a.m.

In moving from the relative comfort of a college classroom into my new role with the Speech Communication Association, I found it necessary to delineate not only the functions of an association executive but also the very nature of an association itself. For me, the words of Alexis de Tocqueville in 1835 still appear to describe the reason for the current expansion of the roles of professional associations.

> An association unites into one channel the efforts of divergent minds and urges them vigorously toward the one end which it clearly points out....At the present time, the liberty of association has become a necessary guarantee against the tyranny of the majority.[1]

In a time when the sources of tyranny may be disguised by the by the products of technology, a highly visable association speaking with one voice emerging from a consensus of divergent views, appears to be an even greater necessity. As I interpret my role and the role of this association in the improvement of curricula, I see three major functions:

1. The service function, involving the dissemination of resources

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[1]Quoted in Jerome H. Hechtman, "Why Government Listens to Associations." Association Management, September, 1973, p. 32.

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and information, which will help members cope more effectively with some of their instructional problems.

2. The catalyst function, involving the process and coordination of education-related information and the stimulation of appropriate research and instructional projects related to that information.

3. The liaison function, which necessitates the establishment of linkages between the membership of SCA and various agencies, institutions, and other professions.

To discuss these three functions in relation to improving elementary and secondary speech communication curricula nationally, we must first look at the problems of curriculum and the goals of this association from a broad perspective. Recently in three major conferences (the Airlie Conference, which outlined long range goals for SCA, this year's Summer Conference which allowed greater participation in the refinement of those goals, and the Memphis Conference of 30 teacher educators in communication) educational concerns of the field emerged clearly. These are represented on your hand-out.

I'd like to talk about these goals from the point of view of the service, catalyst, and liaison functions of national office personnel. In the center of the diagram is our ultimate goal as an association: the improving of human communication behavior in various contexts. To do this, we need instructional personnel capable of relating the knowledge from communication research to the problems or situations in which people use communication. In the three conferences mentioned

we expressed a concern for up-grading the quality of who is doing the teaching. Our concerns are for entrance procedures into communication education programs, pre-service training, including a concern for who will be responsible for teacher preparation, and finally for in-service programs in communication education. The Memphis Conference stressed the need for research data leading to more knowledge about the kinds of competencies necessary to teach speech communication. We are also concerned with the teachers of the teachers of the pupils and the competencies that must be established for them. The question of self-governance in disciplines rather than governance imposed from without will be the major issue for most professional associations in the coming years. If we cannot "police" the quality of the personnel, some state departments of education and others are likely to do it for us.

To begin the tasks of specifying competencies, the SCA national office is supporting and coordinating a project, directed by Dr. Ron Allen, University of Wisconsin, Madison, which is investigating the development of functional communication skills in children using observational data, reports of school personnel, and opinions by speech communication experts. These will be synthesized into a developmental taxonomy from which appropriate curricula can eventually be developed. To meet problems of selection and pre-service teacher preparation, a task force sponsored by SCA will seek to develop guidelines for the establishment of teacher competencies in speech communication, drama,

and media education. An advisory panel of state department personnel, representatives from the National Council of Teachers of English, and people representing various segments of SCA and the American Theatre Association, will review the documents produced by the task force. These documents will go to state and regional associations and back to SCA for approval. The final guidelines will be disseminated and hopefully utilized by state departments of education. Also, as a member of the Guidelines Committee of the Advisory Council of the Associated Organizations for Teacher Education, I will be helping to serve as a liaison from SCA to 20 other organizations who are also in the process of developing or revising their teacher preparation guidelines. Hopefully we can depend upon political support from AOTE for whatever documents we produce in this area.

The problems of in-service education are particularly acute for our association. Many teachers who earned degrees before the recent emphasis on inter-personal communication, have not had opportunities to integrate these new approaches into their teaching. It behooves us as a professional organization to develop the means for bringing teachers up-to-date. A new bulletin going to teachers of speech and English in secondary schools is forthcoming through coordination in the national office. However, it will be necessary to foster conferences for elementary and secondary teachers where their unique concerns can be better addressed by the national association. A recent survey of SCA membership are elementary or secondary teachers, indicates the need to provide more services to increase the membership of elementary and secondary teachers and to involve them in the processes

of the governance of our discipline. One proposal now in the form of a resolution to the legislative council at this convention, is that we form an advisory council of representatives from state organizations who meet annually at the national convention and maintain contact throughout the year with the SCA office.

Another specific idea which can be implemented at the national level is to set up by regions, lists of consultants with specific competencies. These can be distributed through state associations to various schools and associations who may wish to plan in-service programs and workshops to include these individuals.

How we teach, which really involves the inter-relationships among instructional goals, strategies, and evaluation procedures, while being part of the current concerns of educational institutions as is a unique problem in speech communication education. Concerns of the three conferences indicated the need for research and development of evaluation instruments and procedures which respect the confluence of the cognitive and affective domains.

While it is gratifying to note that recently three new secondary textbooks reflecting inter-personal communication approaches and an emphasis on a functional communication have been prepared by members of this association, the national office will need to serve as a catalyst for tapping SCA members to develop even more resources for use by elementary and secondary teachers.

Referring to your diagram, we need to be thinking more about non-traditional contexts for communication-education. First, with today's market, we must modify the options and combinations available to speech communication majors. In New York State, for example, as school boards, boards of regents, parents groups, teachers groups, and state department personnel attempt to find consensus on educational goals and strategies, we find the need for mediators who can get people to hear each other's diverse viewpoints. There can be no discipline more prepared to facilitate the communication processes involved in change through confrontation than speech educators whose very content is process. The role of the speech communication teacher in academic institutions could well become one of the communication consultant in institutional evaluation.

Other roles and contexts are those related to careers. We have for a long time had people in our field acting as consultants to business and industry, but we have yet to develop many departments which could help graduates become job counselors with a focus on the kinds of communication involved in various job settings. One of the needed projects for SCA is the development of a career data bank which would organize careers and related curricula for communication majors other than those in the traditional educational settings.

Turning to what we teach or the content of our discipline, you will note in the diagram that the arrows go in both directions. It appears essential that our field contribute not only to the speech communication research and the research in related communication areas, but also to educational research. Most of the literature on speaking

and listening in the classroom, non-verbal communication, questioning, etc., comes from writers in education or psychology. Also, it is essential to ferret out those concepts already in the communication research literature in such a way that they can be utilized in elementary and secondary curricula. While some writers have attempted to delineate important concepts, the focus on accountability will force us, as it has in other disciplines, to seek that which has actually been verified concerning human communication. Hopefully this will also force us to do some more relevant research about human communication behavior and to provide better means for research utilization by teachers.

On the right hand side of your diagram are my perceptions of liaisons (established or needed) between the SCA national office and various other agencies for the improvement of elementary and secondary curricula. While we have had conferences which facilitated communication between the secondary and university levels, we have done little to assure an on-going exchange among academic units.

Another link to strengthen is that of the speech and non-speech faculties at all levels, perhaps by more frequent exchange of faculty on programs jointly sponsored with the American Educational Research Association, the National Council for Teachers of English, the American Political Association, etc. One excellant opportunity is through SCA's representation on NCTE's Commission on the Curriculum which should provide a valuable link toward the discussion of mutual concerns by speech and English teachers.

In relation to educational change agencies, we need to be aware

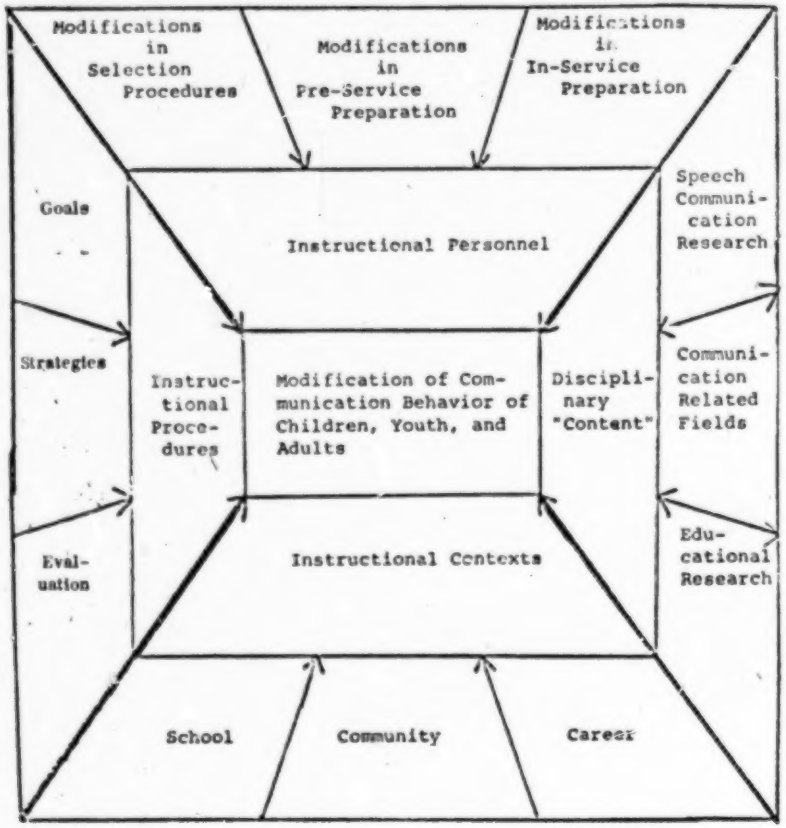
of the growing trend toward umbrella organizations which are attempting to speak directly to governmental agencies. For example, while the total membership of all 20 organizations in AOTE has not yet been tallied, it is obvious that the numbers of people represented will be in the hundreds of thousands, and will be much more powerful than any one organization speaking alone on such broad issues as financing, self-governance and accountability. Other liaisons for SCA include NEA, the American Council on Education, the Council of Communication Societies (which includes ICA), and the Alliance of Associations for the Advancement of Education. As associations consolidate in their educational goals, it would be advantageous for SCA to increase its mergers and visible affiliations with other communication related organizations to bring about needed reforms.

In conclusion, I have a few recommendations: this association can best serve its membership in improving curricula if each individual maintains his association affiliations on the state, regional, and national levels, perhaps through some kind of joint membership plan. In addition, members should support the Administrative Committee's recommedation for a procedures manual from the association which would facilitate the utilization of the association as a means of disciplinary self-governance. Third, the membership must maintain a consciousness that people in the national office must often speak for them as a unit. Members should react and respond to positions taken as these are pbulicized in Spectra, and in divisional and committee reports. As we view our move to Washington in 1975 and its concommittent re-organization of the national office, you must express your views on ways in which we can speak on curricular reform as one channel representing the syntesis of divergent minds.

IMPROVING THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY CURRICULUM THROUGH THE NATIONAL OFFICE

E. Lieb-Brilhart

I. Areas of Educational Concern for SCA as reflected in Airlie Conference, Summer Conference and Memphis Conference.



II. Needed Lines of Communication Facilitation